

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, October 29, 1881, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Hotel Continental, Paris.  
October 29th, 1881. My poor dear little wife:

It's too bad that you feel so tired and worn out. Do please take care of yourself and don't exert yourself about anything. Now that you haven't a baby to lift — or a husband to bother you — take a good rest. Be lazy while you can. Don't read such. I am sure that novels have been injuring your eyes — and you should be more careful of them than of anything else. Get a carriage and drive out in the open air — and take Berta shopping. If you want more money let me know but please don't borrow any from your Mamma or any one else. Shopping is better for you than reading. And fresh cold air in the midst of furs and rugs — better than crouching over a fire. Cultivate roses and smiles for us all — and then my dear I will take you where you will. I will be your obedient and humble servant for the next few months — a sort of courier who will take the details of travel off your hands while he submits the general plan to your dictation. Where do you want to go? To China? I am ready — To Kamskatcha? (I have forgotten how to spell the horrid place so we won't go there) New Zealand? Australia? Yes certainly — any where in the wide world you wish I will go. And the more travelling you want the better I will like it. I feel that this may be our last and only chance for travel — and we can afford it now. Think over your plans so as to tell me when I return. And now I think it is time that I should give you some idea of how I spend my time — or rather how I want to spend my time — for I have been unable to have a day entirely to myself until this very morning. But no — when I come to think of it Dr. Bishop absorbed a full hour — you know how he talks — so this day 2 has not been entirely free from visitors after all.

I must break in upon my subject to give you a few tit-bits of his conversation.

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He is full of Charlie — and evidently thinks his recovery a perfect miracle. He seems to think I am a sort of Amateur surgeon or doctor, for he talks away to me in technical terms as if I understood all he meant.

However I have gathered this — That Dr. Massey and he had settled that Charlie should die in three days — unless some miraculous change should take place that very night. Dr. Bishop had been deputed to break the news to us next morning — but to his surprise — when he came for this sad purpose the change had come — the elasticity of youth had caused a reaction — and the vigour of a good constitution carried him through. Still he said — that Charlie should be careful even now. A continuance of good health would be likely to lead to a relaxation of care — and there might be great danger for him if he caught cold. I told him Charlie was getting quite stout and he said he was glad to hear it as that meant “ A protective covering of fat over the peritonsam ”!! — or something to that effect! He told me to give his kind regards to Charlie and tell him to be very careful not to catch cold this winter — and on no account to give up wearing flannel round the body. By the by rather an awkward incident occurred during our conversation arising from the fact of there being.

I had been talking to him about you, and he had taken a most lively interest in the conversation asking questions of various kinds when he fairly startled me with the remark — that it was a very remarkable thing

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I have absorbed a good slice of the Exhibition today and have relished it exceedingly. Still although I have worked hard I have not examined half of the Exhibits yet. I think it worth my while to complete the work I have taken in hand and so — unless you send for me — I will remain another week. The Building opens for the day at ten o'clock and as soon as possible after that hour I make my appearance in the place — ticking off the Exhibits in the official catalogue as I complete their examination.

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The building is open from ten till five. About two o'clock I am tired enough to seek a seat in the Cafe — and hungry enough for a substantial dejeuner — having had nothing to eat excepting bread and butter and Cafe-au-lait — which is brought up to my bedroom in the morning. After lunch I resume my wanderings until turned out of the building by the gendarmes to the cry of “ Il ferme ” “He she or it? closes” or in plain English “shuts up” — and I can assure you that my angry spirit rises like an echo to my lips — but politeness prevents me from uttering what I feel.

So at five o'clock I trot back to the hotel — stretch myself for half-an-hour upon the sofa — and then sally out in search of dinner.

I haven't to go far — for Restaurants — as you know — are as thick in Paris as Generals, Colonels and Professors in Washington:

At eight o'clock the building is again opened to the public and a glorious sight it then presents — A perfect blaze of glory — Electric Lights of all kinds vying with one another in brilliancy and dynamo machines in full operation in all parts of the building. The evening is undoubtedly the best time to see the Exhibition and I stay there till the lights are put out at eleven o'clock at night. I then proceed to my old Cafe, near the Grand Hotel for “sue grand tasee 4 du chocolat” and a cigar — which I devour (the chocolate not the cigar — no I don't devour the chocolate either — never mind) — which I devour in Company with a London newspaper — reaching my hotel a little before midnight.

I then copy my notes into a book — paste in my scrap-book the collections of the day — and set to work upon the papers for the French Academy. Poor Mr. Johnson has given out for the present and is in bed nursing a bad cold. He left London at five minutes notice, and left behind his new thick overcoat and his washing — and in spite of telegrams and letters imploring your mother's assistance in the matter — his overcoat and his washing persistently refuse to appear.

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He really has a very bad cough. I have given him my dressing gown to wear in his room — and he is going to keep in bed till Monday. Dr. Bishop went to see him today and gave him some medicine which has made him feel more comfortable. You will understand from my account of the disposal of my time, that it has been almost impossible for me to write to you and that will account for the meager scrawls I have sent you. I fully intended to return on Tuesday next and so I have felt that all my time should be devoted to the Exhibition. Now that I realize how much more there is to see — and how valuable the information is that I am acquiring — I think I may as well spare one night for my own little wife and write a respectable letter to her — especially as I have decided to remain another week if you don't send for me post-haste. I should like to remain until Monday the 7th of November when I propose responding to the invitation of Mr. Dumas by addressing the French Academy — Moi meme upon the subject of Radiophony.

The paper read for me last Monday by Mr. Brequet was “Upon 5 an apparatus for determining without pain to the patient the position of a projectile of lead or other metal in the human body.”

The paper I completed yesterday and which will be presented to the Academy next Monday is entitled “An electrical method of determining, by means of a needle, the location of leaden bullets, or other metallic masses embedded in the human body.”

The paper on Radiophony could be read on Monday the 7th of November at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and I could start the same evening for England.

I have enjoyed the dinners and the social kindness I have not here very much — and my only regret is — that sociability requires so much time. I want all my time for the Exhibition. I dined yesterday with the Minister des Postes et des Telegraphs. A grand affair it was — and I surprised myself at the way I talked bad French to my neighbours. I had a lady with an unpronounceable name on my left hand — and Mr. Muscart on my right — and altogether had a very enjoyable time. The honors were done by Mr. Cochery (the

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minister) and by his daughter-in-law Madame Cochery. Madame Cochery was decidedly a handsome young lady — but Oh! the indelicacy of the French mode of dressing! It spoilt her beauty for me. A dress so low as to show about one third of her br-r-r-Oh! — and the armlets or shoulder portion or whatever you call them not on the shoulders at all but an arms where the vaccination mark should appear! thus the only redeeming feature was the necklace of diamonds — which prevented one from admiring as much as we might otherwise been inclined to do — the natural beauty of her neck and shoulders!

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Upon reaching the house of the Minister — I was taken to a table on which were a large number of directed papers. Finding my name on one of then I found it to consist of the plan of the dining rooms with my place marked upon it. Each one of the guests had his place indicated in the same way so that there was no difficulty in finding our proper places at table. I enclose the paper I received as a little memento of the occasion.

The Exhibition is open on Sunday so I will have another long day tomorrow — but Monday will be cut down very much on account of the meeting of the Academy at 3 o'clock — and the dinner given by Mr. Berger to the more prominent exhibitors in the evening.

And now my darling wee wifie — goodnight — and pleasant dreams to you.

Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, Leeds.